
Summary of Steps in an Investigation

1. Your resource social worker phones to tell you that an investigation has begun, and offers to contact a support worker for you.
2. The investigating protection social worker and your resource social worker meet with you and inform you of your right to obtain legal help (call the Provincial Federation office for information)
3. The investigating social worker interviews you and keeps you informed throughout the investigation.
4. Your resource social worker and support worker provide you with support throughout the investigation.
5. The regional protection manager notifies you by registered letter of the investigation. Within 30 days, the protection manager notifies you by registered letter of the decision reached.
6. Within 7 days of receiving the decision, you may ask for a review by sending your request in writing.

See the booklet “Foster Care
Protocols” for full
details

Fostering is caring for someone else's child temporarily - a child who, because of family difficulties, health or the absence of guardians, is in need of someone to provide for their well-being.

Fostering is challenging, demanding, frustrating, enriching and rewarding.

Fostering can give you the opportunity to make a difference in a child's life.

Foster parents are people like you, from all walks of life, who welcome children into their homes for a certain time, people who can help children to grow and to cope with life - now and in the future.

Foster parents offer much and accept little in return. They show compassion and acceptance to a child who may be unable to respond. They have the patience to wait for a child who, because of earlier experiences, needs time to learn to trust adults. Foster parents can love and nurture a child and then let him or her move on with their lives.

Foster parents' rewards are in the smile of a child who has not responded before, in the chronic runaway who has stayed home for a week, in the positive action of an unhappy adolescent and in the first step of a handicapped child.



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Publication of the brochure is made possible through
BCFFPA fundraising initiatives



SAFEGUARDS

FOR FOSTER

PARENTS



BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations

“Resilient Foster Parents = Empowered Children and Youth”



You and your Family

The suggestions in this pamphlet are intended to make your experience as foster parents as rewarding as possible. There are many things you can do to increase safety for children in your care, your spouse and your birth children, and to reduce the possibility of allegations of abuse. By taking preventive measures and being aware, you can avoid difficult situations.

More information on this subject can be found by contacting the Federation office, 1-800-663-9999 or in Burnaby 604-664-0124

Parenting Practices to Reduce the Risk of Allegations of Abuse

Allegations of abuse are of concern to all foster parents and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. While not all allegations can be eliminated, the chances of an allegation being made can be reduced by developing preventive parenting practices.

Preparation for a New Placement

Before accepting a child, be sure you have all the information you need to provide a protective environment for the child, your birth family and other foster children in your home.

Helpful questions to ask are:

- “Has this child (or their parent) ever made false allegations?”
- “Are there specific measures we should take to reduce the risk of allegations with this child?”
- “Has the child ever been physically or sexually abused in the past?”

Dealing with Past Abuse to Reduce Risk of Allegations

Ask the child's social worker for information to assist you in working appropriately with an abused child. Avoid replicating circumstances the child associates with the abuse, to enhance feelings of comfort and safety in your home.

Helpful questions to ask:

- “Who was the abuser?” (Age, sex, relationship)
- “Where did the abuse happen?”
- “When did the abuse happen?” (Bath time, bed-time, etc.)
- “What are the details of the abuse?” (Particular routine used by abuser)

Viewing Your Home Through the Eyes of Others

Foster parents are “public parents”. Try to look at behaviours in your home as if you were watching from outside. Are they rational and easily explained to someone else. Be aware of the child's reaction to your home. Don't assume the child will interpret your actions as you intend them.

Dress appropriately - what you and your family are used to in terms of modesty may be misinterpreted by the child. Plan sleeping arrangements with care.

Be careful if helping with the personal hygiene or medical routines of a foster child - touching might be interpreted by the child as abusive or sexual. Be aware of any time you or other household members spend alone with the child. Intentions and motivations can be misinterpreted.

Try to remain in control when a child is acting out . Try not to be provoked into losing your temper.

Physically restraining a child is a forbidden discipline technique, and may be used only if the child poses a risk to self or others.

Physical discipline is against ministry policy and contravenes the Rights of Children in Care.

Prepare for Transitions

Children often feel hurt and rejected when they leave their foster home. Working through some of these feelings with the child before they leave your home may reduce the risk of a false allegation.

Record-Keeping and Team-Work

Keep daily logs for each individual child in your care. Ask social workers to read and sign the logs on every visit to your home. Report all unusual incidents to your social worker, by phone, then in a short written report. If you are unable to cope with a child placed with you, notify the child's social worker. Ask for help, or for the child to be removed.

Maintain a good working relationship with your social workers. Talk to them regularly and openly. Try to deal with issues as they arise.

Know the Protocol for Investigating Reports of Abuse or Neglect

This protocol was developed jointly with the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations and the ministry.

All foster parents are entitled to support if they come under investigation for abuse or neglect. Upon notifying you of an investigation, your resource social worker will offer to contact a support worker for you.

A Support Worker is an individual with specialized training who:

- provides confidentiality within legislated limits
- is a “listening ear” providing emotional support in a time of stress
- can assist as you go through the investigation process

The sooner a support worker is involved, the more assistance they can give you.